

# REVIEW, REFLECT AND REFRESH



Time management during the PSLE examinations is important, so Casuarina Primary School's head of mother tongue languages Mohamad Zareen Mohamed Shariff (centre) suggests pupils learn to divide the allotted time for planning, writing and checking their work. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

**As pupils enter the last stretch of preparation before the written papers, experts suggest they concentrate on learning lessons from mistakes made, among other tips**



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With the written papers in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) a month away, parents may be tempted to get their child to ramp up revision, but overdoing it now may be counterproductive and even lead to burnout and anxiety, experts say.

Pupils may feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of material that they need to revise in the lead up to the PSLE, says Associate Professor Gregory Liem from the National Institute of Education, who teaches educational psychology.

To reduce the possibility of burnout by the end of September, he suggests that parents ensure their child has breaks during the day and quality sleep at night.

These few weeks should be spent on systematic and targeted preparation as this will help alleviate pupils' anxiety and boost their self-confidence, he says.

"It's time to gradually move away from the piles of practice papers and focus on the areas for improvement, and go through quick revision notes such as learning jour-

nals or mind maps," says Prof Liem.

The Learning Lab's science subject head for Tampines and Seletar, Ms Choo Xin Ying, suggests that pupils focus on revising important topics and concepts, instead of reading through long chapters in textbooks.

If they have difficulty recalling the facts, they can try creating simple mnemonics, for instance, using a short or interesting phrase or an acronym to help them remember information, she says.

It is important to spend time reflecting on the mistakes and lessons learnt from practice papers instead of attempting as many questions as possible, she adds.

Beyond content knowledge, Ms Choo Swee Heng, The Learning Lab's mathematics lead subject head, says pupils should take time to reflect on the strategy used during the preliminary exam.

"For example, students should ask themselves if they could have avoided a careless mistake by allocating time to check or draw a model diagram or annotate key-

notes on the side," she says.

Both teachers agree that it is best not to attempt new practice papers or challenging questions a few days before the PSLE.

"New questions at this point may pose more stress. Opt for reviewing and re-attempting questions (where they made) mistakes," advises Ms Choo Swee Heng.

#### **KNOW THE EXAM FORMAT, ALLOCATE TIME FOR ANSWERS**

Besides brushing up on unfamiliar topics, pupils can familiarise themselves with the exam format.

Mr Jayce Or, founder of science enrichment centre Germinate Learning, says the science paper's multiple-choice questions (MCQ) 1 to 14 are usually on life science topics and questions 15 to 28 on physical science topics.

Likewise for the open-ended section, questions 29 to 34 are usually on life science topics while questions 35 to 40 are physical science topics.

"For MCQ, focus on understand-

ing the key concepts and definitions, and eliminate the wrong choices. Take note of the distractors, which are close but wrong answers, that may trip up pupils who are not strong in their understanding," he says.

For open-ended questions, he suggests that pupils practise answering similar questions. "Understand how to structure your answers and support them with the correct concepts," he adds.

The second strategy is to have good time management during exams.

He suggests that since the science paper is one hour and 45 minutes, pupils can allocate 45 minutes for the 28 MCQ, and 45 minutes for the 12 open-ended

questions, with 15 minutes for checking. This will give one to two minutes for each MCQ and three to four minutes for each open-ended question.

If pupils are stuck on a question, it is best to move on and come back to it later.

"Some years when the MCQ were tougher, some pupils spent too much time on those questions and could not finish the open-ended questions," he says, advising that students leave time to check for careless mistakes and incomplete answers.

Casuarina Primary School's head of mother tongue languages, Mr Mohamad Zareen Mohamed Shariff, agrees that time management is crucial.

For the Paper 1 component of the mother tongue language exam, in which pupils are expected to write a composition, he suggests dividing the 50 minutes into 10 minutes for planning, 35 minutes for writing and five minutes for checking.

#### **TIP**

If pupils are stuck on a question, it is best to move on and come back to it later.

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